Rockway Bridge closing to traffic

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MISHICOT — After 72 years, the Rockway Street Bridge is closing to motor traffic.

The 15-foot-wide concrete bridge will now become a covered footbridge, said Mishicot Police Chief Jim Froelich.

"We looked at this two years ago," Froelich said. "We were told it was unlikely it will pass a (state Department of Transportation) inspection. Then you can't use it as a walkway bridge either."

In the coming months, a roof and rough-hewn boards will be added to the aging bridge by the Wisconsin Conservation Corps, Froelich said. The roof will be covered by asphalt shingles that look like cedar. Windows seats inside will allow visitors to view the river.

"We want to use it as a tourist attraction," Froelich said. "Now it will connect the downtown with the playground and park areas."

Dick Baugniet of Mishicot remembers when oncoming motorists had to wait for other cars to pass. He also recalls boys leaping from the four-foot high sides into the East Twin River.

The 72-year-old bridge on Rockway Street in Mishicot will close permanently to vehicles Tuesday. The Village Board decided to build a roof over the bridge and keep it open to pedestrians. *Herald Times Reporter* photo by Kurt Rentmeester

For Francis "Buster" VanderLogt of 617 Oak St., the narrow 72-year-old bridge led to more important things — like bringing him to his new job in 1944 at the former Western Condensing Co. That's where he met his wife, Ethel. She worked in the office, while he worked in the plant.

That's when milk trucks and whey tankers traveled the bridge daily. He moved to Mishicot came after working at Western Condensing plants in Appleton and Adell.

The mightiest — albeit one of the narrowest — of bridges should be a tourist draw, said VanderLogt, who still makes an occasional visit to the site.

"You take a bridge that held up with all that weight, (and) there's no effect (on it)," VanderLogt said. "It could hold up another 70 years."